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ABSTRACT

This paper concentrates on two strategies, circumvention and cooptation, used by planners and implementers to overcome various obstacles in designing and starting-up innovative schools. The authors show how the special features of a new school's relationship with its environmental setting create the need for these strategies; illustrate through examples from the field certain dynamics at work as the new school carries out these strategies; and offer some practical guidelines that will be useful to planners and implementers of new schools. Of the two kinds of cooptation possible--classic, in which the school seeks support in order to neutralize resistance, and collusive, in which the school seeks support in order to get people's strategic aid in circumvention--only collusive is discussed. The four main techniques for getting around rules are concealment and lying, manipulating the letter of the law to your own ends, ignoring directives, and working through people. The rules of thumb in the use of cooptation and circumvention strategies fall into five general categories: distinguishing the organization from the environment, environmental mapping and prediction, visibility minimization, political skill, and purposeful strategizing. (Author/IRT)

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CIRCUMVENTION AND COOPTATION IN THE PLANNING OF NEW SCHOOLS*

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Introduction

How people plan and implement new innovative schools has been the major focus of the Project on Social Architecture. Our research has sought to identify and describe planning and implementation processes, and to provide concrete information on the actual "how-to" of new school design and start-up. This paper serves the latter purpose. We will concentrate on two strategies, circumvention and cooptation, used by new innovative schools to overcome various obstacles that may block their goal-directed actions.

The idea for this paper emerged from our observations of planning groups' interactions with their environments. It appeared to us that the development of new innovative schools often posed special problems with respect to acquiring necessary resources and support. We observed in our fieldwork that in some cases, regular established procedures were quite appropriate and useful in this quest. In many situations, however, planners found that getting around the rules was sometimes a more effective and efficient way (and in fact sometimes the only way) to accomplish a given planning task. How, when, and under what conditions is it necessary to circumvent official procedures and to coopt crucial personnel? These are the subjects of this paper. We intend to

- (1) show how the special features of a new school's relationship with its environmental setting create the need for these strategies;
- (2) illustrate, through examples from the field, certain dynamics at work as the new school carries out these strategies; and
- (3) offer some practical guidelines which will be useful to planners and implementers of new schools.

Circumvention, in brief, is one strategy used by Planning/Implementation groups to maneuver around whatever constraints or limits the environment may impose on their efforts to get support for and to protect the goals of a new school. Because circumvention involves extra-legal or even illegal maneuvering with respect to official rules, the strategy is not often discussed. There is a dearth of material in the

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organizational literature on how to do what you're not supposed to do. And yet, there are myriad allusions (in discussion of administrative controls) to the fact that as soon as a rule is established, people will find a way around it. This paper will not include illicit maneuvering done for personal aggrandizement, but only circumvention for the group's goal achievement.

Cooptation is one strategy used to get support from people or groups in the environment. We began with Selznick's classic definition of cooptation as a method by which an organization

...adjust[s] to the pressure of specific centers of power within the community...[through the]...process of absorbing new elements into the leadership or policy determining structure of an organization as a means of averting threats to its stability or existence. (Selznick, 1966 (orig. in 1946))

Our own research on circumvention is informed by an understanding of this support-base building function of cooptation. While we are certainly interested in how planners/implementers gain support through the process of cooling out potential opposition and turning around resistance, we learned during data collection for this paper that getting support from people within the various environmental bureaucracies is part of the process of circumvention. Planners/implementers coopt individuals who, by being in a knowledgeable or influential position in the environment, can help the new school in its circumvention attempts: we term this the collusive function of cooptation. The success of most circumvention strategies depends on these collusive agents.

Our research for this paper included collecting data on the classic support-base building function of cooptation. We divided our efforts between the study of the school's support seeking in order to neutralize resistance (classic cooptation), and the school's support seeking in order to get people's strategic aid in circumvention (collusive cooptation). For the sake of brevity and because much has already been written on the classic type of cooptation, we will focus on cooptation only as it occurs within circumvention.

Data Base

The concepts and ideas outlined in this paper are the direct result of one and a half years of fieldwork in new and proposed innovative public schools. We have drawn our data from the following sources:

- 5 innovative schools which opened up between 1970 and 1975
- 2 innovative schools which are still in the planning stages and are due to open in 1976
- 13 interviews with planners of new innovative schools. Seven of these interviews were conducted specifically for this paper.

Fieldwork methods included numerous site visits, informal interviews, observations and telephone calls.

Anonymity and confidentiality of the sites and planners are protected, and the only names used in the paper are pseudonyms.

I. ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING AND THE NEED FOR CIRCUMVENTION

In this paper, we will consider how a goal-oriented organization may be affected by its environment. We are specifically concerned with one method planners and implementers of a new school use to handle the constraints which the environment imposes.

Originally, our research project intended to study how people plan and start up innovative schools by focusing on the small group relationships and the dynamics of the group process of the planning committee. However, we found that while understanding the dimensions of interactions among the planners is a critical aspect of our research, we could not view the planner/implementer group* in a vacuum. Our observations and fieldwork indicated that our planning groups and new schools were not self-contained, but very much subject to the workings of the larger environment. Where we had planned earlier in our study to look at the environment only insofar as it interfaced with the new school in some way, we discovered that our sites were spending a tremendous amount of time dealing with their larger systems. Being committed to "the discovery of grounded theory" (Glaser and Straus, 1967), we followed the lead of what seemed to be going on in the field situation and let that determine the shape of our research design.

Mapping the Environment

As Miles has expressed it in his paper, "Thinking About How to do it: Alternative Models of Planning and Implementation of New Schools,"** a P/I group's planning model provides a

. . . mapping of the arrangements of people, time and actions seen as necessary in order to deliver the P/I group's final product: a functioning school.

The sub area with which we are concerned in this paper deals with

mapping the environment in order to acquire necessary resources and support from the environment...[which is]...essentially political and external, requiring environmental maneuvering and the exercise of influence strategies. (p. 4)

* Hereafter referred to as the P/I group.

** Delivered at the April 19-23, 1976 AERA meetings. Available from the Center for Policy Research.

One experienced planner of innovative schools summed up his coping style and illustrated how one can operationalize the concept of mapping the P/I environment.

My framework comes out of Organization Development (OD). I define my job as having two parts: an inside and an outside, the latter including political things. I differentiate very clearly between these two fields. On the inside I use OD management techniques, where everything is open. Then I see the rest of the world as external or political and the strategy is always political there. There it's a win-competitive kind of thing, and all I'm concerned about is getting what I want. I'm not too concerned about the means there.

The implications of this planner's frank comments on political posturing and strategizing encouraged our interest in the P/I group's efforts to maneuver with respect to its environment. We find ourselves agreeing with one author's contention that, "in the composite, environmental constraints constitute some of the major factors a manager must work with in planning, formulating policy, and making decisions" (Carlisle, 1973, p. 29).

Interchange between Environment and New School

Many notable organizational theorists, writing from a systems analysis perspective, have represented an organization as an open system involved in interchange with its environment (Buckley, 1967; Rhenman, 1973; Emery and Trist, 1965). We will refer to some of their analyses of this interchange, not to pay ritual deference to a review of the literature, but rather in an effort to establish certain premises which underly our study of circumvention and cooptation. These are:

- (1) that planners and implementers of innovative enterprises must devote particular attention to acquiring resources and other forms of support from their environment;
- (2) that the environment of any organization, and especially of a new school, usually poses some constraints or limitations which could hinder its successful goal achievement;
- (3) that circumvention and cooptation are two strategies used by planners and implementers to manage such constraints.

In order for any organization to achieve its goals, it must be successful in acquiring resources or support (i.e., potential resources). This is even more necessary in a new or innovative organization since even though there may be existing resources, the planners may not know they are available, or may not know how to acquire them. In

this instance, the classic entrepreneurial function is critical. Someone must act as the broker who brings together money and ideas, or the new organization will flounder before it ever gets off the ground. Thompson and McEwen say that the most successful organization is the one which takes initiative in seeking support from its environment. In this light, the strength of a P/I group would be judged, not only on the basis of its formal mandate, but also on its ability to convert potential resources into actual power. The P/I group's ability to win support for the new school is just as important as its ability to envision a new school (Thompson and McEwen in Brinkerhoff and Kunz, editors, 1972; Zeigler, et al., 1974).

The interaction between organization and environment always introduces some form of environmental influence over the organization. No matter what an organization's activities are, they have to be approved by or useful to its environment in order to maintain support. This means that an organization may be liable to certain environmentally imposed conditions (constraints) upon which continued support is contingent.

Characteristics of a New School's Environment

There are two often-expressed and seemingly contradictory features of the relationship between schools and their environment: The first is that schools are "commonweal" organizations and that they are vulnerable to environmental influence because of their highly permeable boundaries.

The American public school, even more than other public organizations, is subject to control, criticism, and a wide variety of 'legitimate' demands from the surrounding environment.

(Miles, in Sergiovanni & Carver, 1969)

The reason for this is the legal responsibility of local school district governments to be accountable to the people (Zeigler, et al., 1974, p. 242).

The other feature is that schools are exempt from market sanctions (financial rewards or punishments) for successful innovative adaptation to environmental changes.

Public enterprise is largely exempt from the negative sanction of diminishing profit or financial demise in case of failure to adapt to changed conditions or inability to seize new opportunities. In other words, public bureaucracies are free of market constraints; they receive few rewards for successful innovation and few penalties for failure to adapt to a changing environment.

(Fainstein and Fainstein, 1972)

A normal public school's survival is relatively assured by its parent bureaucracy* and by society. Therefore, it has no strong incentive to experiment with new educational practices--it has a captive market. On the contrary, there is a tendency to preserve the old methods if they work at all, since experiments or innovations mean risk (Pincus, 1974).

The implications for planners and implementers are profound. The first feature, vulnerability, implies that P/I groups might consistently be in an inferior position with respect to control over their own fate or their goal achievement. Also, other elements in their proximate environment might consistently have some resource or support on which the P/I group depends for its goal achievement. And finally, this would reinforce our earlier observation that the success of the P/I group in achieving its goals depends upon politically skillful transactions with influential environmental factors.

The second feature, an absence of market constraints and hence, of incentives to innovate, implies that school bureaucracies are not only tradition-bound but they are also "innovation-resisting" in Shepard's terms (in Bennis, Beene & Chin, 1969). The P/I group has to consistently resocialize individuals or groups before it can solicit support successfully because there tend to be no bureaucratic norms supporting innovation in normal public school bureaucracies. Rogers, in his descriptive analysis of the hardened bureaucrats at 110 Livingston Street, says that the selection process for personnel and the socialization norms reinforced in everyday work both have the same effect on employees--they concentrate on establishing individual job security, and on developing their own office into an autonomous fiefdom. The career rewards within a bureaucracy go to individuals who have practical ideas, not necessarily to those who have innovative ones. Along with other authors, Rogers contends that bureaucratic obstacles to innovation are centered in the people and the normative system and not only in the bureaucratic structure (Rogers, 1968; Fainstein & Fainstein, 1972). Later in this paper, we present examples from our interviews with planners which illustrate that the people within a bureaucracy can be crucial to either blocking or aiding innovative efforts. When planners coopt individuals within the bureaucracy (through resocialization, persuasion, or conversion) and then work through them to get around official constraints, we term this the collusive function of cooptation.

*This refers to the agency which oversees the development of the school. This is most often the administrative headquarters referred to as the board of education. In this paper, Board of Education will refer to the 5 or 6 person appointed or elected lay group, while board of education denotes the entire bureaucracy normally headed by a Superintendent or Chancellor.

The Bimodal Power System

The power system which supports the new school is bimodal. One center of power is in its own management, in the P/I group which formulates goals and directs group activities toward achieving those goals. The other power "center" is really a web of outside agencies, organizations, and individuals who, in some way, have a stake in the development of the new school (Rhenman, 1973). This includes the parent bureaucracy and other vested interests such as teachers' unions or community associations. Where another type of organization, such as a corporation, might be autonomous, with its own management holding centralized power, we have already learned that in the case of public schools, the external power centers can be quite strong.

These two power centers may differ in their opinion of what goals the new school's activities should focus on. Sectors of the school's environment, either the parent bureaucracy or other vested interests, may have formulated certain goals which serve their own needs and which they want the school to satisfy. For example, the business community may feel that a proposed new high school whose development it has encouraged should function as a private training school specifically to prepare young graduates to be acceptable employees. Or, elementary school parents may feel that their children should not have to cross certain dangerous intersections on their way to school. And certainly, the board of education will feel that the new school should achieve many goals, as prescribed by everything from state education laws to "this is the way we do things around here."

By way of contrast, the innovative school has its own goals which it considers crucial. These may be shared with sectors of its environment or they may be special--e.g., to create a new set of social relations between teachers and students, or to rezone an elementary school district such that each school has an equal number of students. An innovative school must struggle not merely to survive for the first year or so, but also to develop an optimal situation in which the interchange between environment and new school is characterized by mutual support and satisfaction. The strategy or processes through which the new school develops such a situation must take into account:

1. its own internal goals for self-benefit, including exploitation of any useful sectors of its environment; and
2. its external institutional goals held in cooperation with its parent bureaucracy or other vested interests, and requiring joint efforts: (Rhenman, 1973, pp. 30-32)

Specifically, the P/I group of the innovative school must obtain support for its own goals, and make sure that environmental sectors are satisfied that their goals are being achieved.

Given the bimodal power system and its resultant two sets of goals, the political system with which the new school defends its goal achievement is extremely complex, with "coalitions between parties in the organization and legitimized power centers outside" (Rhenman, 1973, p. 109). Therefore, the P/I group needs a wealth of political skills.

Environment's Disposition toward the New School

In general, we have found that P/I environments range on a continuum from favorable through unfavorable. There are instances when a site has no trouble in acquiring support and seems to be successful in almost every endeavour. And there are instances where a new school seems to be deluged with unfavorable circumstances over which it has no control. It has to do not with Fate, but with a configuration of environmental factors.

In an effort to represent the complexity of organizational environments, Rhenman has distinguished them according to values by which the environment measures an organization and determines any sanctions to be applied. The two value dimensions are generous vs. restrictive, and organization-oriented vs. environment-oriented (pp. 37-47). A restrictive environment is one which applies a large number of constraints to the organization in terms of rules for what must or must not be done. A generous environment imposes relatively fewer constraints. An organization-oriented environment is one which judges P/I group success by the P/I group's own values or standards of achievement, and according to how well they are achieving their own goals. An environment-oriented environment assesses the P/I group's success according to how well the P/I group achieves certain goals or meets certain standards set by interest groups in the environment.

Applying these distinctions in an analogue to a firm's economic environment, Rhenman posits three types of value environments:

free value environment, in which the supranorms and values used to measure the organization are derived from the organization's own internal functioning;

political environment, in which the organization is also assessed in terms of its satisfaction of stakeholders' needs and the organization's activities are regulated by "prohibitive or prescriptive norms;"

mixed environment, in which features of both political and free value environments are combined.

An innovative public school exists in a mixed value environment. As in the free value setting, the norms for P/I group actions are derived from an implicit code for professional educators and the school is assessed according to professional standards.

But also, as in the political environment, the school must be responsive to what its stakeholders expect it to produce, and it must act within whatever constraints the environmental sectors are powerful enough to enforce.

Earlier, we reasoned that an organization that is initiating some innovation requires substantially more resources/support than an ongoing organization. We have cited references showing that schools are more vulnerable to and accountable to elements of their environment than some other types of organizations. Given these conditions, four types of environmental constraints to which a P/I group may be particularly liable include:

1. Standard Operating Procedures, including bureaucratic norms and rules.
2. Legal Regulations
3. Budgetary Restrictions
4. Social Norms and Expected Behavior

II. THE PROCESS OF CIRCUMVENTION

Why is circumvention necessary for new innovative schools?

1. The larger system has its own interests to protect which may depend in part on maintaining things the way they are. Designers of alternatives are consciously setting out to change what currently exists as accepted practice. Most innovative schools claim to want to fulfill needs that are not being attended to by the present system. They present a threat to the established means of doing things. If it is true that there tend to be no bureaucratic norms supporting innovation in most school bureaucracies, and that like most traditional bureaucracies they have a built-in resistance to innovation (Shepard, 1967), then it is quite possible that even what planners conceive as perfectly innocent, non-threatening ideas may meet with difficulties from the most unexpected places.

2. A new system is less likely to have developed a solid support group. Just by virtue of not having been around very long, a new group may not have formed the powerful connections which would be required to try to change the constraint.

3. A planning group may not want to spend the time it would take to change the rule. Time and energy expenditures in the planning of new, innovative schools are almost uniformly problematic and demanding: there are more than enough straightforward planning tasks involved in starting up a new system without having to fight the bureaucracy when there might be a more efficient way to get what you need.

4. Trying to change the constraint may create other problems. Assessment of possible consequences may turn up evidence that changing the constraint would endanger the planning group in some way, such as losing credibility, alerting the environment to be on the defense against it, or owing someone too much for changing the rule for the group's benefit.

5. A conflict of priorities may exist between the new setting and its environment. As we mentioned earlier, there are most often two separate sets of goals which are at stake; the priorities of the environment and its determination of what the goals of the new setting should be; and the new school's goals for its own organization. The larger system may want the new school to put its energy into tasks which are antithetical to the innovative vision or which interfere with the P/I group's ability to carry out its job effectively. In an urban alternative high school which has survived five years of conflict with the board of education, the Director reported that the hassling with the bureaucracy over one petty problem took 5 or 6 hours of total person time. The Director said that he does not have the time left to keep the school running the way he wants to and is diverted into playing a stupid, petty role, "unable to do some major crucial operating jobs in the most difficult circumstances precisely because of this petty bullshit."

5a. The vision of creating a new set of social relationships is at stake for the planners of an innovative school. Regular procedures do not necessarily apply to this vision and in fact may be at the very root of the motivation for change. New procedures may be needed in order to operate the school differently, for instance in the ability to select committed and creative staff without having to adhere to union or board lists, or to allocate money to non-traditional activities. An urban school planner gave her rationale for circumventing the central board altogether in the early stages of planning:

Their standard operating procedure is to pull a list of equipment and space use out of a desk. It has nothing to do with what really goes on inside a school.

5b. The ability of the planners to adhere to their goals may very well make the difference between producing a totally innovative new school and a scotch tape and bandaid model which quickly becomes routine and ordinary. The director and planner of an alternative high school said that "if you really believe in what you're doing and you're not getting what you need by the direct approach, you can certainly use circumvention."

Preparing to Circumvent: The Information-Seeking Stage

Circumvention and cooptation are two strategies which can help planners manage their environment, attain their goals, acquire their resources, and build their power base. Both require knowledge of the environment within which this action is taking place, as well as good data on what the probable consequences of that action will be.

The first and seemingly necessary stage of circumvention is the information-seeking period. A certain base level of information is required in order to be able to interpret environmental constraints accurately and determine who are the stakeholders and loci of power whose actions are in some way relevant to the planning of the new school. One planner whose alternative school had struggled with its board of education for several years and was then forced to go traditional, admitted that their failure to assess their environment was one of the major reasons why they lost their vision of a truly innovative school.

The selection of an appropriate method for managing environmental constraints is a strategic matter in itself and is determined by the nature of the relations between the P/I group and its strategic target. In advance of taking any action, the P/I group needs to know as much as possible about:

1. the formal and informal structures of decision-making and authority
2. key stakeholders or interest groups and their power positions vis a vis the new school
3. official rules, regulations, laws
4. informal rules, social sanctions, norms, including protocol and institutional jargon
5. the priorities and goals of the larger system
6. possible consequences of violating the constraints

A planner stated that he generally thinks about a planning problem by asking the following questions:

- What do we have to do to get what we want?
- What are our options?
- What can't we get around?
- How can we find out informally?
- Who are the key people whose support we need?

He emphasized that he always conceived of and approached the controlling bureaucracy purposefully, never haphazardly, and always with a clear idea in mind of both the map of the environment, the specific responses he wanted from it, and the chances for success.

Predictability. The point of mapping the environment is to enable planners and implementers to have some means of predicting what actions to choose and what the outcomes will be. The

problem of mapping is a complex one in any situation; however, certain situations lend themselves to a greater degree of predictability than others. The general community environment seems to present greater difficulties in mapping than does the more immediate parent bureaucracy, and new systems have more trouble mapping than do existing ones.

Our reports from planners in the field seem to indicate that communities may be less predictable than formal organizations, since it is harder to pinpoint all the variables at play in a diverse community than in a formal structure with a finite number of positions and goals. Furthermore, one planning director thought that the suburban communities with which she was dealing were less predictable about school issues than neighborhoods in a large city might be, where participation in decision making about education is much more limited by the insulation and largeness of the bureaucratic machine. The normative climate in the suburban area dictates much more lay input by its naturally decentralized structure and its greater degree of lay control over tax and budget decisions.

In another suburban site, a principal who was hired from out of state to implement an open space elementary school began by methodically mapping out the immediate bureaucratic environment. But he did not anticipate the community's norm for almost universal parent participation in educational issues. The strategies he formulated for coping with the environment were inadequate because they did not pay enough attention to the close interface between school and community. That he had limited time and a totally unknown situation facing him may have excused him professionally and personally. But because of his inadequate strategies, the outcome for the school was a demoralizing and upsetting conflict in which parents pressured school officials to build walls and totally reorganize the vision of the faculty-planners.

New systems, and particularly new innovative systems, have special problems with respect to mapping their environments accurately. Uncertainty about the present and future is a constant; the unknowns are numerous and often critical to the planning. These uncertainties are compounded by the limited connections to good information that any new system faces. Additionally, there may be a resistance among the planners to thinking in bureaucratic terms; planners designing alternative schools generally seek to create social organizations which have norms and sanctions which are substantially different from traditional settings. As Miles (1976, AERA, p. 3) points out, many of these plans are conceived partly as anti-structures: "whatever the establishment has, we want the opposite." The faculty-planners of the suburban open space elementary

school were striving for an anti-bureaucratic vision in which they hoped to avoid political wheelings and dealings. However, they discovered that even if the goal of the internal system is to set out different expectations for behavior and exchange relationships, this can only be done with an understanding of the context of the new school in the larger system. They have found that if they want to fight bureaucratic power and establish their alternative, they themselves may have to learn about the power relationships and even resort to bureaucratic means to get around environmental constraints.

While it is necessary to sense out probable effects in advance of taking action, a planner said that "you deal with the unpredictable as soon as you begin to innovate; it is often difficult, if not impossible, to know what will upset people and what won't." In one of our sites a radical move to implement district-wide open education is facing little or no resistance, but a minor rezoning plan affecting relatively few students is meeting violent objection.

Timing

Circumvention seems to be most needed at the time when a director or principal is hired and resources must be committed in earnest if the school is to open at the appointed time. As we have stated, a new school generally requires more resources than an existing one, and an innovative school often needs expenditures for non-routine programs and materials. Limited availability of and access to resources may necessitate finding other ways to get what is needed, especially since the school is not yet a tested commodity which has proven to be a "good investment" or a safe risk. As a school becomes more established, planners report they have found less and less need to circumvent. With luck and skill, cooptation and participation replace the need to flout the regulations. In answer to the question, "When do you use circumvention?" a particularly skillful planner and circumventer said, "Only when you have to."

Techniques of Circumvention

We would like to preface our remarks about techniques of circumvention with an explanation for our choice of examples. We have used both mundane and sophisticated incidences of circumvention to show the range of situations in which this strategy might be appropriate. Circumvention of one form or another may be necessary at all levels of planning and operation of a new school, regardless of the size of the bureaucracy, the favorableness of the environment, or the severity of the constraints. We are also interested in showing both the variety of obstacles facing planners of new schools and the sometimes ingenious solutions they have devised in response to their constraints.

Based on our interviews and observations of planners and directors of innovative schools, four main techniques for getting around the rules have emerged. They include:

- A. Concealment and Lying
- B. Manipulating the letter of the law to your own ends
- C. Ignoring the directives
- D. Working through people

None of the above is mutually exclusive, and many circumventive actions involve more than one of the techniques. The last, working through people, is what we term the collusive function of cooptation.

A. Concealment and lying. A successful progressive metropolitan principal was asked how he managed to get away with implementing such interesting and innovative programs in his school. He replied, "I just don't tell them what I'm doing." Used repeatedly by all planners we interviewed, this tactic enables new schools to carry out plans with minimal interference from the environment, provided that low visibility is feasible and carefully maintained.

Concealment and lying worked well in the following situations and produced the following results:

1. A new school hired paraprofessionals to do the work of licensed teachers, violating a Board constraint requiring that all classes have a licensed teacher in the room. This enabled the school to operate many more innovative programs with its limited funds than would have normally been possible.

2. A principal submitted vouchers during the year, supposedly for services rendered by a guidance counselor during the school year. A summer school was run with the money instead, in violation of the Board regulation that there were to be no summer schools that year. The tactic was used to obtain other material resources not covered by formal budget allocations.

3. A school Director manipulated attendance levels to show a steady 75% attendance rate. His action was based on knowledge of the board of education's top priority to raise attendance levels. He also knew that levels that are too high or too low will raise the visibility level of a new school.

4. A progressive Superintendent is involved in a regional planning effort for innovative arts education which will be funded through the Boards of Education in each participating district. Fearing that financial difficulties will prevent his district

from supporting the effort, he has arranged to have his district's share paid through a disguised budget item which he hopes will pass the Board unnoticed.

5. A really radical innovation in an urban career school for dropouts was protected by out-and-out lying by the Director. A charter providing a core group of students with final decision-making power was developed between the Director and the students, but the Director lied to the board of education and told them that he did in fact have ultimate control. The innovation survived, and the Superintendent was eventually informed of the real situation by the Director, after the Superintendent had been coopted into a position of full support.

B. Manipulating the letter of the law to your own ends. There are times when trying to conceal a circumventive action is less efficient and safe than appearing to obey the regulation officially while flouting its spirit secretly. Again, this is particularly effective where there is little chance of follow-up or observation on the part of the rule-making environment. Planners and school directors took the following actions in which they used a rule to their own ends:

1. The principal of a small rural school had a budget line for "equipment," but he needed a "supply." He bolted the supply to the wall and called it equipment.

2. An urban elementary school used volunteers and graduate students to operate its arts program--the core of the school--in violation of the constraint requiring that there be a certified teacher in every room. Budget and union restrictions about allocation of personnel prevented the school from obeying the regulation. The planners circumvented the constraint by leaving the door open and having a licensed teacher across the hall. Technically, it was considered one space.

3. A State requirement that the Director of an innovative regional arts program have administrative certification is considered less important to the P/I group than that the Director be committed to the arts and the education of talented and gifted children. The planners are considering circumventing the constraint through an organization chart they had designed for the proposed program. The chart places the Director of the regional educational agency which is coordinating the planning at the apex of the decision-making structure. Thus, the "Director" can be said to be certified.

This tactic demands that the planners have a good idea of which rules can be manipulated in this manner. The consequences of discovery might be minimal, as would be likely with the supply-equipment juggling. Or they could be serious, as with certification problems, which might endanger accreditation, cause problems with unions, and risk loss of state and federal funds.

C. Ignoring the directives. One response to a demand by the larger system that the new school do something which is out of line with its priorities and vision is to simply not do it, and pretend to never have known anything about it. Planners must have a clear understanding of their own priorities in relation to those of the environment, and an accurate assessment of the consequences. One planner advised:

Get as much information as possible on your environment. Have a good system of information so you know what to expect. Know before you ask the bureaucracy what the answer will be. Don't ever ask formally if you think the answer will be no. With a no, you can't plead ignorance.

Planners and Directors we interviewed gave the following examples and advice:

1. The obstacle imposed by the bureaucracy was the demand for repeated administrations of standardized tests. The demand was time-consuming, to the detriment of other priorities that were more pressing in the planners' eyes. Also, it undermined the very changes the alternative school was trying to implement. One Director said:

They'd send us tests. We'd throw them out. We'd say, "What tests? We never got them." We ignored the city-wide testing; it was not consonant with our goals.

The school had a fairly good idea of what tests would be absolutely required, and took care of those accordingly. There was little or no follow-up beyond the reply that the school had never received them. The Director said they had once tried the straight route, refusing explicitly to give a test, writing a letter to the board of education explaining their rationale for why it was not in line with their goals, and received a reply with an equally justified rationale for why the school had to give the test. The Director said, "That was the only time we ever tried that route."

2. One professional educational planner advised securing outside planning money for the entire early planning period, so that it is possible to totally ignore the parent bureaucracy, avoid petty interference, and prevent the environment from cutting off planning money in midstream. The planners are then able to concentrate their energy and time on their plans, while mapping out their environment at the same time to prepare for the time when they do need to confront the board.

One possible consequence of this tactic, if discovered, may be the enforcement of the neglected orders. Reports that were never filled out in an urban alternative

school are now being required by the board of education, taking up enormous amounts of time and adding to the already incredible administrative work load which existed even before the severe budget and staff cuts. Another might be the occurrence of the situation the rule was meant to avoid, e.g., a school which allowed its students off campus for work experience but circumvented the board of education's required parental forms could have met serious repercussions if any harm had come to any of their students while they were off the grounds of the school but reported present under the attendance system.

D. Working through people. This technique is merely cooptation as it occurs within the process of circumventing the rules. Locating those persons within the bureaucracy or larger system who will collude with you and help you carry out any of the previously mentioned strategies is often the most critical element of the tactic. Our informants emphasized the necessity of seeking out the good people in the environment. They gave the following suggestions:

1. Deal with middle management. Find the people who are responsible for moving papers from one desk to another, for approving vouchers. Know the people who, if they cannot move the project forward, could endanger it at a later stage.

2. Make it your business to know people in every office that is essential to you. Develop personal relationships. Take them to lunch.

3. Walk all things to the bureaucracies, where possible. Things don't get lost and you get to know people at the same time.

4. Go through the same people as much as possible.

What can personal relationships do for the planning of a new school? Our informants gave the following examples:

1. A great relationship with the Number 3 person in Personnel allowed teachers to be hired for the school when there were freezes. They wangled licenses and got waivers allowing elementary school licenses to be converted into high school licenses.

2. They received information about grants when it was not disseminated to anyone else.

3. They were always informed where reports required by the board of education were going. The school could then make up the ones they knew would not be checked, and keep the reports to be audited very accurately and carefully.

4. Union variances allowing non-list hiring are granted pretty much at the discretion of union officials. Good personal relationships with union officials allowed freedom of choice in selection of staff.

5. Site approval by the buildings department was received within a week (as opposed to the usual laborious process) for a school which sought to locate in the basement of a church. Good connections through the parish priest to the veteran Diocesan architect to the Buildings Department produced the permit, and enabled the planners to avoid having to pay the bribes normally necessary in that situation.

6. An urban high school developed a contract which allowed it to determine how it would allocate funds among its own priorities (except for certain salaries, books, and straight instructional matter). This example will be spelled out in detail, since this was a really massive attempt which sought to circumvent the board of education's standard operating procedure for the allocation of resources which is done on a unit allocation basis, with total control over every detail. The need to circumvent the regular method grew out of the planners' desire to: a) ensure full community participation in the planning and operation of the school; and b) provide very different kinds of innovative programs than existed in the normal city schools (e.g., no limit to age for enrollment, group homes for children with difficult family situations, day care facilities for their students with children).

The contract was developed and instituted through the following process. Outside funding money was secured during the early planning period, and in an effort to control the distribution of those funds so that they would not have to fight with the board of education over every penny, they drew up a formal agreement with the board which provided a monthly lump sum allocation. When the planners began to think over the problem of how to involve the community on the level of policy-making, once the school was open, they realized that being able to spend allocated money according to the priorities of the internal organization rather than the larger environment would be one way to provide real community control over education. They spoke to lawyers and found that the only function which the board of education could not delegate to the individual school was control over actual instruction, and no one had ever really defined the parameters of "instruction." They drafted a document requesting a budget of about \$250,000 that was based on the model for spending the outside funding money, and submitted it to the board of education.

The board was quite certain it did not want any part of the contract, but just to make a negative answer definitive, they referred it first to their Counsel

and then to the State Department of Education, feeling sure that it would be turned down there. The planners called the State Department to find out the status of the contract, and were told that the Counsel there had prepared a memo that was ready to go back to the board, refusing the request, and calling the contract totally illegal.

One planner explains:

We didn't know anybody in the State Department of Education legal office, but we did know the Title III person and the curriculum person. They told us who to go to in the legal offices, so we took a bus to the state capitol and found a friendly second level guy in the legal office who really worked over the whole notion with us and suggested ways we could improve it. This junior attorney and our other connections leaned on the Counsel and convinced him to take another look at the proposed contract. It came back several days later approved.

Now the law is really pretty vague about what can and cannot be delegated. It made a lot of difference what wall that proposal came off of. Coming out of the Counsel's office at the local board, it very likely had a fairly negative cover letter accompanying it. When they got word from somebody up there inside their office, they reconsidered it.

One of the key things I learned is that you have to respect and find the super people in the various terrible bureaucracies because they're there if you look for them. We never did anything except with the help of the people in the system.

The contract allowed the planners to accomplish their innovative goals, and provided the further advantages of enabling them to secure additional outside funding (developing a national support base in the process) and to establish new and different sets of social relationships among students, staff and community.

At the same time, however, the blatant nature of the school's circumvention of the bureaucratic methods for allocating money, certainly one of the most guarded and sacred of all functions due to the amount of control it allows, was just too much of a precedent setter and threat to the board for it not to have caused some difficulties. Thousands of person hours have gone into hassling with the bureaucracy over the contract, which comes up for renewal yearly. The amount allocated to the school has been drastically reduced over the years, and restricts flexibility greatly. The school is fighting for its survival in this day of budget cuts, but its leaders reiterate the necessity of the contract in adhering to their vision.

Visibility

Since circumvention involves doing something illegal, non-legal, or non-routine, the question of who knows about it and how flagrant the attempt is may make a difference in the consequences of the strategy. There are advantages to both low and high visibility; however, since we are talking about infractions of the rules and deviations from the norm, usually in pursuit of a goal greater than the breaking of the rule itself, most situations call for keeping a low profile.

Our research indicates that it is important to centrally manage any illegal maneuvering and to restrict the number of people who know about it both within and outside the planning group. In the early stages of planning and operation, a planner recalled that only he, his assistant and secretary, and the person directly involved in the circumvention (such as the guidance counselor who was being illegally paid to run the summer school) knew. During the first year of operation, the Director set up a political committee of students and staff who were chosen for their political sharpness and ability to keep things quiet. They recommended strategies, but the Director made the decisions the first year. Later on, after trust was established and the goals of the school had been developed and internalized enough by the members, the process was opened up more. But as in the case of someone who had tipped off the board about the illegal elementary school renovations, it is important to know who has access to information about your strategies, at least to the extent that it is possible to control that information.

Factors heightening visibility. First, there is the inevitable visibility of a new innovative school. Planners and implementers of new innovative schools reported that different standards are called up by the larger system and applied to alternative programs. One reason is natural curiosity about something new and unknown. Another has to do with the malleability of a new system: things can be changed more easily because they are not in place yet.

But planners also expressed the contention that general resistance to change in the environment makes the larger system pay more attention to things that are different and to apply standards to alternative schools that they do not apply to other schools. The planner of the radical urban alternative relates this incident:

The Board would not allow the school to give a diploma at first. They said we were not an accredited school. They pulled that out of a hat and it was a very specious argument because in this city individual schools are not accredited, but ours, according to them, was supposed to be. That's what I mean about applying standards to alternative schools that they don't apply to other schools.

In an attempt to avoid this differential application of standards, the same planner said that they tried to get as much explicit leeway as possible from the board of education by putting agreements on paper. He commented that a safer and more advisable method might have been to make these agreements informally. But he noted that while the principal of a traditional school could probably do this easily, a project that is different from the norm needs a more solid position from which to negotiate.

Thus, the new school is immediately more visible to its environment by virtue of its innovativeness and not necessarily because of any actions it has or has not taken.

A second factor heightening visibility is the desire to be a beacon of change. Most alternative schools have some notion of becoming a model of change that other educational institutions can look to for inspiration. Merely providing one alternative to the traditional system of schooling is not what most innovative planners have in mind; in fact, without high visibility, the larger system can dismiss the innovative school as an anomaly, as an option, rather than a model, to which they can point when they are accused of not moving forward educationally.

Questions of survival and preservation would naturally be more important than considerations of becoming a model school, and the planners may have to content themselves with low visibility in order to protect their circumvention attempts and their new school.

A third visibility increasing factor is small size and efficiency of the controlling organizations. A small efficient parent agency can endanger circumvention strategies and make it more difficult to do things secretly than a large inefficient bureaucracy, where one division does not know what another is doing. These are not hard and fast criteria (as none of our dimensions are); the variables for judging the safety and sensibleness of choosing the non-legal route are numerous, interdependent, and must be looked at as part of a total picture.

Factors decreasing visibility. On the other hand, large size and inefficiency of the controlling agency tends to decrease visibility. The more ponderous the machinery of the bureaucracy, the easier it is to use the techniques of "concealment" and "ignoring the directives." In that setting, it is entirely believable to say you "never got that test" or "no one told us that was necessary."

Secondly, as one planner said, "you are not the only thing on their minds." Planners of schools in both large city bureaucracies and small, more organically-managed environments echoed this sentiment. P/I groups can capitalize on this by not bothering the top level any more than necessary, complaining rarely, and controlling the flow of information to the outside.

Consequences of low visibility. The advantages of low visibility in the planning and early stages of start-up can aid in expanding planning flexibility, allow the school to develop total concepts and visions with a minimum of diversion from outside demands, and give the P/I group time to find out the critical elements of the relationship with the environment.

Staying out of the limelight until the school is firmly established is a generally safer means of carrying off any illegal strategies without discovery. And the more established the school becomes, the less circumvention seems to be necessary.

A low profile does not mean that the school should not have a strong public image, but rather that it should be carefully presented and designed to fulfill certain environmental expectations.

Consequences of high visibility. In this section we will examine in detail the negative consequences of one (among several we observed) circumvention attempt which was too visible and brought down the wrath of the larger system on the new school.

In the urban alternative high school with the special contractual arrangement for distributing money, the consequences of the massive circumvention of the Board's traditional area of allocation of resources may have been too much of a threat and precedent setter for the central board of education to accept. This school, more than most others, maintained rather high visibility generally throughout their planning. This is partly because they were planning in the late sixties when pressure and demonstrations were an effective means of action. Also, they believed that a powerful support base which extended beyond the limits of the education system was necessary to develop a school that aimed to clarify and alleviate complex political and economic problems and issues facing its students, including racial and ethnic discrimination, job opportunities, community responsibility on a serious level, and real grass roots participation in determining educational policy and procedures.

As was mentioned, the school has been fighting the central board yearly about the contract (and actually had to sue the board once for non-payment). According to the current principal of the school, the contract threatened the people who really intensely disliked community participation and did not have the guts to say so, as well as the people who were terrified by this model of spending.

The eventual outcome of this conflict was a massive fight between the school and the board over the board's refusal to renew the contract, endangering the basic structure of the innovation. The school mobilized a major public campaign and the board relented, but it cut the amount of the allocation to a fraction of what it was originally and severely restricted the school's flexibility, although it did not eliminate it altogether.

When we asked the principal about the consequences of the visibility of both the contract itself and the massive publicity effort to save it, he said that it may have been a pyrrhic victory:

You're right, that by making this public, we were obviously saying to everybody, "why did they have it," but that is exactly what we were trying to say...

Did we make ourselves more vulnerable? Yes. Are we in great risk of being one of the first schools in the city to be wiped out? Yes. But they sure as hell have to proceed with caution now that they know of the clout we have. It may balance itself out.

III. THE EFFECTS OF CIRCUMVENTION

Achievement of Project Goals

The major and intended effect of circumvention attempts is to achieve the goals of the new school, attain its innovative vision, and ensure its operation and survival. In the field examples presented thus far, we have seen planners and implementers successfully using circumvention to get the maximum benefit from limited funds and personnel; to select staff on the basis of their commitment to the school's innovative purpose, rather than on the basis of union lists; to protect time and energy for developing truly new and different programs; and to avoid subversion of their vision (e.g. refusing to administer standardized tests in a school for drop-outs).

But what happens when circumvention attempts fail to produce the desired results? For the most part, planners we interviewed were relatively successful in their attempts to get around the accepted channels. This does not mean that circumvention does not have inherent risks. According to most planners and directors, circumvention is not a preferred strategy; it is a necessary technique to be avoided whenever legitimate means are adjudged to have a good chance of success. In cases where circumvention does fail, the consequences to the new school can range from minimal to jeopardization of survival of the innovative vision. The severity of repercussion depends both on the nature of the original circumvention attempt and the visibility of the failure.

The examples which follow illustrate some of the problems and consequences.

1. An urban elementary school, faced with the board of education reneging on promises to renovate the decrepit proposed site of the new school, took matters into its own hands and knocked down walls itself during the summer prior to the scheduled opening. Someone tipped off an official at the board and the renovations were halted amid hysteria and charges of trespassing from the bureaucracy. Threats by the board that the planners would have to pay the cost of the renovations never materialized, and

the renovations were finished by the board (at a much higher expense). Long-range consequences were minimal, though the affair raised the visibility of the new school. This example points up the necessity of controlling the flow of information to the outside when engaged in illegal activity.

2. The Director of an alternative school inadvertently did not follow protocol in negotiating with a local university for a decision to allow his students to take courses at the college. He was taken into the confidence of a dean who did not go through the university's proper channels of authority for such a decision. When the proposal was presented to the vice president in charge, he told the director to go back and do it all over again through regular channels. Long-range consequences again were minimal, but the circumvention of key people because of ignorance and poor information doubled the Director's work load and endangered his relationship to the vice president.

3. In authorizing the building of a suburban open space elementary school, the Superintendent circumvented the official mandate of a bond issue which had originally allocated money for a school with 20 classrooms. The community was not as committed to open space education as the Superintendent and resistance to the new school mounted as the opening date approached. A group of parents made an effort to enforce the specifications for the school as originally presented in the bond issue. It would be too simplistic to say that the school's innovative vision was lost due to the Superintendent's circumvention. But it certainly was one contributing factor to a prolonged conflict over the school's open space program, which eventually was transformed away from the original vision. The consequences could have been worse, in that the misrepresentation of the bond issue could have incurred legal action. This has not happened.

The most skillful circumventer we interviewed said he had never had an attempt at circumvention fail, yet he managed outrageous infractions of the rules, while at the same time maintaining excellent relationships with the powerful people at headquarters. Circumvention requires attention to the nature of the constraints themselves, understanding of formal organizations and communities, careful action and purposeful planning, a good intuitive sense, and a feel for what will be politically safe and expedient.

Personal and Professional Consequences

A clumsy or overly visible circumvention attempt can have repercussions not only for the project at stake but for the individuals involved as well. Our expert circumventer reports that he never faced any problems along these lines; people he worked with who aided him in his circumvention attempts were only those who were very comfortable with this means of operation, and he never asked anyone who had any doubts about a particular strategy to take part in it.

But the personal and professional risks are not small. While we did not uncover any glaring examples where circumventers were "caught" and "punished," our informants did relate incidents where loss of power and credibility occurred. Circumventers who use illegal, as opposed to non-routine strategies run greater risk of facing the consequences of law enforcement. However, our field data points to the idea that careful consideration of all the important variables may help avoid any negative consequences, including those to the individual.

Group Building

Circumvention strategizing also has an effect on the working procedures and social organization of the planning group or new school.

The essence of circumvention is finding a creative way to get around the constraint. Coming up with interesting approaches to problem solving and trying to assess the consequences may increase the group's ability to explore options, expand its variety pool, and design really thoughtful and exciting structures and support systems for their school as well as for dealing with their environment. Knowing that there are other means for doing things outside of the normal channels may actually increase the innovativeness of the new school.

At the same time, circumvention may contribute to a sense of group cohesion, a feeling that "we're all in this together," a gleefulness at outsmarting the powers that be. Any external threat can aid in strengthening the internal group, but in this case, it is the planning group or school which is taking the offensive and fighting back in an arena where they have a greater chance of success than if they were fighting the bureaucracy on its own terms.

A negative unanticipated consequence along the same lines may result from the confusion of the two spheres which one planner outlined earlier: the external political field and the internal small group field. If the distinction is not clear to the people within the planning group or school or to the leader him/herself, the danger is that a breakdown of trust between leader and group may occur because the internal group sees the leader's actions vis à vis the environment as manipulative, and fears that s/he may be doing the same thing to them.

Changes in Rules and Procedures

Circumvention may threaten the rule or procedure being circumvented, or it may actually protect the larger institution from having to make any changes in its procedures at all.

The planners who conceived the special contract for allocating school money did not perceive their actions as a threat but actually thought it was an intriguing,

useful and instructive idea that would save the central board time and energy.

Even putting ourselves in the board's position, we thought the idea was a pretty good one. One of the reasons the board did not get involved with projects like this school was that there was just too much time involved in dealing with a special institution while they have the rest of the system to run. So we thought that one advantage of the contract system would be that we would lay down the ground rules, keep people out of their hair, and make it generally easier for them.

It succeeded in one sense in that we went for long stretches running amazingly independently, without talking to the board. Then there were those times when they'd catch up with us. And it became a nuisance to the board, in a way we hadn't figured. Here was an unprecedented thing they were trying to administer, so payments got lost or would sit on desks for months, and we ended up having to sue the board. The thing got very much discolored in the board's mind in attempting to just make the contract work.

Those problems could have been part of a sabotage in the form of leaving things on a desk for weeks, complicated by the general ponderousness of the board's machine and an unworkable relationship between the board and the Controller's office.

The hope that this arrangement would ease the bureaucracy's task never materialized due to the basic complexity of the contract in comparison with the board's more complicated but standardized voucher system and the fact that the contract invaded the board's control over the distribution of resources.

A circumvention may threaten the structure of the larger system in some way. That threat may be real or perceived by the organization; it may increase or decrease on the basis of other changes. The teachers union was not terribly concerned about the enforcement of their hiring practices during the first year of the urban alternative's existence, because they were certain the school's failure was imminent. By the second year, faced with the reality of the school's survival and heavy layoffs in the school system, the union came back and said, "from now on you are hiring through us and you follow the list."

A circumventive strategy does not really question the rule in and of itself. It says that the rule does not apply here and that the P/I group is going to try to get around it some way. It does not usually say change the rule, but instead accepts its existence. Thus, most of the time, it avoids setting precedents and preserves the status quo.

IV. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The Cooptation-Circumvention-Confrontation Continuum

Cooptation and circumvention are only two strategies for manipulating the environment and getting what is needed for the planning effort. They must be seen within the larger spectrum of strategic actions to be taken in response to environmental pressures. From our interviews with planners, a kind of continuum emerged which expands the choices available to planners and may help in understanding where circumvention and cooptation fit into the larger planning model.

Cooptation emphasizes building support and averting threats to existence and stability through the process of cooling out potential opposition, turning around resistance, and gaining support from necessary powerholders in the environment. The cooptation effort can either be sincere and desire representation, or it can be a means of avoiding participation by giving the illusion that the coopted group or actor is having real input into the planning. The strategy may also result in varying degrees of support, from token gestures and lip-service commitment to true participation and committed support.

Cooptation can also be the means of implementing circumvention attempts by cultivating collusive helpers in the bureaucracy and environmental agencies. These are generally middle management levels but can also be top decision makers. Most often, they are the people who do the work as opposed to those who make the policies. They have less power and influence than the "stakeholders" whom it is necessary to coopt in order to build a solid power base and ensure survival of the new school, but they are just as critical to the planning and implementation efforts. Most circumvention attempts require this type of collusive cooptation.

The circumvention attempt may achieve its goals satisfactorily and get around the constraint blocking its progress. It may, in some rare cases, become official policy and change the constraint. While we mentioned that one advantage of circumvention for the larger system is that it protects the rule by getting around it instead of changing it, there are cases where the circumventive solution makes more bureaucratic sense and is accepted as official practice. In a hassle with the personnel office of the board of education, the principal of an urban alternative had a terrible time trying to reach anybody in authority in that office to help settle the problem. He began to circumvent that office and went to the high school office instead, which was much more accessible and easier to reach by telephone. The principal said that he thought that the procedure has since become official practice. In another incident, a planner who

himself possessed enough power and stature in the educational bureaucracy was able to institutionalize a typical circumvention: that of trying to get around certification requirements for teachers and administrators in special, innovative programs. He introduced a bill into the legislature which permitted this practice, and subsequently was able to use the flexibility in his own planning efforts.

If circumvention fails, however, and there is no quiet way to get around the rules, and at the same time, cooptation is not enough in itself to get what is needed, going public and using a tactic of confrontation may be the next step. If, through good cooptation efforts and generally effective support-seeking efforts, the new school has established a strong base of support, it should be possible to mobilize those centers of power and influence to join together in action. There is a critical juncture at which it is necessary to choose high visibility as a tactic where the planners/school had previously circumvented the constraint. The urban alternative high school with the special contract found itself in this position when the renewal of the contract was turned down by the administrative leadership of the central board. The director said that in the earlier life of the school, the line of the school had been very low key concerning a public effort of any kind, based on the feeling that this was a shrewd strategy for dealing with the less than favorable environment.

But there was a point at which we felt that we had to change that strategy and we went after public relations. It's true, the more visible you are, the more of a threat you are... But there's no way, in my book, ...that you can properly gauge the risks and the potential damages.

After having exhausted every internal channel trying to reverse the ruling, the school reached out and mobilized a fantastic support effort, including state and federal congresspersons, city leadership, Board of Education members, all political officials connected with the district from the federal government to the local councilman, federal funding agencies, and students, parents, staff, and community.

The central board had to keep responding to these constant pressures from people who they knew counted. Now they could discount some of this on the grounds that some of it, as we all know, is pro forma. But they didn't know how much to discount. It worried them as it should have worried them.

The net result was that the school was able to save the contract, although in a much reduced form. The larger positive consequence for the new school was the display of powerful support behind their school, going far beyond the confines of the educational system alone.

Thus, all the people and groups the school coopted along the way either directly or in the process of circumvention attempts fed into the mobilization for a successful confrontation with the board of education.

Guidelines for Successful Circumvention

In summary, we have shown that cooptation and circumvention are two strategies used by the new school in its efforts to attain its own goals regardless of limiting or constraining environmental factors. The chief characteristic of its environment which makes these strategies necessary is derived from the fact that external organizations or interest groups (e.g., parent bureaucracy, community associations, etc.) often have different goals which they think the new school should achieve. And through the bimodal power system, the external parties are often able to influence the new school to achieve those goals. The new school is even more vulnerable to their external power since it is involved with them in social exchange relationships for support-seeking and resource acquisition. By coopting these external power sources, the new school gains their support (actual or potential resources). Specifically, by coopting individuals from external power sources, the new school gains their collusive aid in circumventing constraints.

We also hope to have shown a different view of cooptation than the colloquial one in which it is portrayed as a process without honor for any of the participants. Cooptation does not necessarily mean that one set of goals is sacrificed at the expense of another--although this can occur (as has been interpreted by McLaughlin, 1976). Instead, it is a legitimate support-seeking strategy in which relevant persons or groups are convinced of the worthiness of the project and convinced of the advantages that will be realized through their support or aid. Those who coopt and those who, having been coopted, collude with the P/I group in circumvention, may all be motivated by the belief that the new school's successful goal achievement is most important, whether for altruistic reasons or because of some perceived advantage to the coopted individual or group.

Our interviews with planners indicate the following important principles or rules-of-thumb in the use of cooptation and circumvention strategies. These fall into the following five general categories:

- A. Distinguishing organization from environment
- B. Environmental mapping and prediction
- C. Visibility minimization
- D. Political skill
- E. Purposeful strategizing

A. Distinguishing organization from environment. The first and most important recommendation is to be aware of the distinction between the new school's internal

organization and its external environment. This is more than a semantic distinction for the new school with its especially permeable boundary and its extensive social exchange relationships. Planners/implementers should never make the mistake of manipulating members of their internal organization as they might do with external parties, and they should insure that internal organization members do not misconstrue their external political strategizing as a threat to group unity. Otherwise, there will be a situation in which group members have little or no trust in their leaders (also referred to as a "credibility gap").

B. Environmental mapping and prediction. The second set of guidelines has to do with the planners/implementers mapping of their environment and their success in predicting the consequences of any strategic alternative. Planners/implementers must really know their environment, and that means having a good system of data collection. Data collection and usage must be effective enough so that planners/implementers can know the usual policy on a given matter without ever having to ask the bureaucracy a direct question in case they later have to circumvent that matter. Planners/implementers must know:

- the formal and informal structures of decision making and authority;
- key stakeholders or interest groups and their power positions vis a vis the new school;
- official rules, regulations, laws;
- informal rules, social sanctions, norms, including protocol and institutional jargon;
- the priorities and goals of the larger system;
- possible consequences of violating the constraints.

One universal rule is to figure out who could be powerful and who could be an enemy. Planners and implementers we interviewed were unanimous in saying that relationships are the key. One should always look out for the "good people" in the bureaucracy, the ones who will serve as collusive agents. One must keep in touch with people at the top, if only as a matter of form. But, in general, one should work through assistants and middle-level people as much as possible. Never go to the top when you can get it done at a lower level. In addition, never ask middle management if it can be done but rather how it can be done.

C. Visibility minimization. Many of the above-mentioned guidelines deal with visibility, with the caveat that planners/implementers and the new school itself should not be conspicuously different from ordinary schools, at least in

much of its presentation to the public. These rules make it easier to carry out circumvention without much attention. Planners/implementers must demonstrate respect for the establishment and, if necessary, accommodate to their social norms and preferred behavior. It is crucial to be a diplomat and a salesman. Without losing sight of their own goals, planners/implementers must mesh their own goals with those of the person they are trying to coopt. In line with keeping a low profile, our interviewees advised planners to complain as little as possible to the bureaucracy and never "bother" the top level. Avoid defying the authority of someone in a line position over you; failure to do this could result either in jeopardizing the survival of the school or could preclude the possibility of circumventing the constraint, since a negative response had already been made explicit.

D. Political skill. Another set of rules-of-thumb concerns planners'/implementers' political savvy. In general, since it involves illegal or extralegal activity, circumvention should be used as little as possible and circumventing legal financial constraints should be used even less. If circumvention is necessary, planners/implementers should protect themselves by putting as little on paper as possible. In choosing a strategy from among several alternatives, our informants advised against the use of pressure group tactics and sit-in type demonstrations since such tactics will distract attention from the issue at hand. In addition, the P/I group should always look united to the outside, and so any fighting should be done inside, in private.

E. Purposeful strategizing. The final set of principles for planners/implementers stresses the importance of clarity and caution in strategizing. One must be very clear of the new school's goals and, obviously, believe in them. Every contact with the environment should be purposeful, and not haphazard. Do everything carefully, from mapping the environment to envisioning all possible consequences.

The consensus among planners whom we interviewed was that the ability to carry out strategies of cooptation and circumvention was a necessary skill for planning leaders and new school directors. Most said that they had learned these skills through experience, trial and error, and that they thought people could be trained to carry out these strategies as part of the education of a leader. One expert circumventer said that if one is uncomfortable playing a political and manipulative role with respect to the environment, then one should not be in a leadership position. He advised that someone who is expected to lead an innovative program should have demonstrated ability for dealing with the politics of organizations. Even with all

the above recommendations and guidelines, however, it often comes down to questions of individual ability and talent to sense what is going on in a situation and to respond sensitively and keenly by doing the right thing at the right time. Coopting people is a matter of determining organizational interests, but it is also a matter of being able to hook up with people easily. Given the riskiness involved in going around accepted channels and breaking rules, the whole process can be quite nerve-racking to a leader and requires a person who can stay calm and on top of all the manipulations. The high degree of uncertainty involved in new school planning generally, and in circumvention especially, add to these pressures.

We hope that this paper has made it clear that circumvention, while not the central tool of planners (who are usually not all that Machiavellian anyway), is nevertheless an important and little-discussed aspect of new schools. Without circumvention, there probably can be no serious innovation in a new organization which is embedded in a large bureaucracy, itself surviving in an uncertain environment. Careful use of circumvention may help planners and implementers of new innovative schools to realize their vision and institute successful, enduring alternatives to existing educational practice.

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